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FOX RIVER CURRENT

Update from the Lower Fox River Intergovernmental Partnership

Vol. 2, No. 3 July/August 1999

Fort James Offers Landfill Space for SMU 56/57

By Corinne Billings, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Inside

Fort James Corporation has offered to dispose of some polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-contaminated sediments dredged from the Lower Fox River. Under the plan, the Fort James landfill, located north of Austin Straubel Field and the Oneida Bingo and Casino in Green Bay, will receive sediments dredged from a portion of the river known as Sediment Management Unit (SMU) 56/57. The project is slated to begin this summer and be completed this year.

Fort James intends to isolate the PCB-contaminated sediments in a section of its company landfill specifically designed to safely contain such wastes. For the life of the landfill, Fort James will be responsible for monitoring the site and testing any water that may leach through it. In the unlikely event that leached water would contain PCBs, it would be treated with activated carbon to remove the PCBs before being sent to a wastewater treatment plant.

SMU 56/57 is located near Fort James' west mill. PCB concentrations in sediments at this location are among the highest in the river, and the Fort James landfill is expected to receive 70,000 to 80,000 cubic yards of sediment

dredged from the site.

"We're pleased with the cooperation exhibited by Fort James," Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) project team leader Bruce Baker said. "Local cooperation is critical to finding a long-term cleanup solution for the whole river."

Under a 1995 agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the DNR received federal authority to approve the disposal of PCB wastes in state landfills, with added monitoring and reporting requirements. The state must also issue a public notice and offer a comment period whenever a landfill is seeking to dispose of PCB-contaminated sediments with concentrations over 50 parts per million. DNR staff reviewed Fort James' plans to accommodate PCB wastes in its landfill to make sure that additional requirements under the state-federal agreement are met. The Fort James landfill is the first disposal facility to be approved under the 1995 EPA/DNR agreement. The DNR will continue to use this authority to deal with PCB-contaminated sediment in the Lower Fox River.

The DNR and Fort James hosted a public meeting on May 13, 1999, to discuss disposal plans at the Fort James landfill, including the safety requirements in its design and monitoring. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting at the Neville Public Museum in Green Bay. The public had an opportunity to make comments and ask questions after presentations by DNR and Fort James staff. Some meeting attendees were opposed to PCB disposal at the Fort James landfill, whereas others were pleased that Fort James offered its landfill space for the 56/57 project. A public comment period on the disposal issue ran from

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April 30 to May 30.

DNR is reviewing the results from the Deposit N dredging project conducted near Kimberly last winter. The Department has not yet decided if they will pursue further action at this site.

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Fish & Wildlife Service to Release PCB Fish Injury Report

By Larry Dean, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

In the summer of 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will release a report detailing fish injuries from polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the Fox River, Green Bay, and parts of Lake Michigan. The report is part of the Fox River & Green Bay Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) being conducted by the federal government and the Oneida and Menominee tribes.

Fishing on the Lower Fox River

The PCB fish injury report will be available for review on the Internet at http://www.fws.gov/r3pao, and by appointment at the FWS Reading Room at 1015 Challenger Court in Green Bay (call Joe Moniot at 920-465-7408 to schedule an appointment).

The fish injury report will summarize several individual reports previously released by FWS that covered PCB injuries to certain fish species. It will explain how Fox River PCBs injure fish in the Green Bay system, and will discuss:

- why Green Bay is so important to fish, and why fish are so important to Green Bay.
- various ways that PCBs harm fish.
- how and where fish are exposed to PCBs.
- the PCB fish consumption advisories which have been issued for every sport fish in the Fox River and Green Bay (based on the Fish Consumption Advisory Report released in December of 1998 and available at the same web site).
- direct injuries to walleye caused by PCBs (based on the Walleye Report released this summer and available at the same web site).
- direct injuries to lake trout caused by PCBs (based on the Lake Trout Report released this summer and available at the same web site).
- the meaning and implications of these reports and other scientific studies that have been

conducted on PCB injuries of Green Bay fish.
- the relevance of data, reports, and studies for making legal determinations of fish injuries for the NRDA.

This report is very important in understanding why the Intergovernmental Partners are cleaning up and restoring the Fox River and Green Bay. It is comprehensive and detailed in explaining how fish injury evidence will be used in the NRDA (and the related ecological risk assessment being conducted for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). The FWS also hopes that citizens who wish to understand the problems that local PCBs are causing for fish over thousands of square miles will read this report and give their input on how best to fix the problem.

The FWS will release all of its Fox River and Green Bay NRDA determinations this year, including reports on PCB release and pathway, bird injury, fish injury, economic damages, and restoration projects.

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Clean Water Action Council Receives EPA Grant

By Susan Pastor, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently awarded a $50,000 grant to the Green Bay-based Clean Water Action Council.

Great blue heron on the bank of the Lower Fox River.

The Council will use the grant, called a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG), to hire a technical advisor. This advisor will interpret and clearly explain technical information presented by EPA and its partner agencies in documents related to the Lower Fox River cleanup project. Under the terms of the TAG, Clean Water Action Council must then share what it learns with the rest of the community. According to the group's application, it will accomplish this goal through newsletters, fact sheets, press briefings, letters to newspaper editors, web site postings, and regional meetings.

The TAG money will cover the cost of a technical advisor for three years. Although Clean Water Action Council received $50,000 from EPA, the group is also required to match 20 percent of that amount, or $12,500, through a combination of cash and in-kind contributions.

EPA awards TAGs to grass-roots citizen groups whose members are affected by Superfund sites or sites (like the Lower Fox River) that are proposed for Superfund listing. Groups applying for TAGs must be certified by their states as non-profit organizations. Applications must demonstrate broad-based citizen representation, an ability to keep sound financial records and continuous interest in local environmental issues. Potentially responsible parties, political subdivisions and educational institutions are not eligible for TAGs.

The Clean Water Action Council TAG is the fourth in Wisconsin. TAGs have previously been awarded for the Sheboygan River and Harbor, Kohler Company Landfill and Sauk County Landfill Superfund sites.

Clean Water Action Council has 3,000 regular members as well as 17,000 smaller contributors. Groups in alliance with the Council include Wisconsin's Environmental Decade, Great Lakes United, Door County Environmental Council, Chappee Rapids Audubon Society and the Brown County Alliance. For more information about Clean Water Action Council or its TAG-related activities, contact Executive Director Rebecca Katers at (920) 437-7304.

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DNR Reviews Public Comments on Draft Cleanup Studies

By Kelly Mella, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is currently reviewing public comments on three draft scientific studies that detail the risks associated with polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination in the Lower Fox River, and outline possible cleanup alternatives for the river. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funded the studies, which were completed by ThermoRetec, Inc., a private consulting firm.

Individuals and groups submitted over 150 formal comments during the public comment period that ran from February 26 to April 12. A preliminary review of comments shows a range of responses to the draft studies. Some express support for immediate and specific action to clean up the Fox River, while others advocate no cleanup action at all. The majority of respondents seem to agree that some action is needed, but that more detailed analysis should be completed before a final plan is decided upon.

The first study is a Risk Assessment (RA) that identifies potential threats to the environment and human health from PCBs. This study cites research on the health of fish and wildlife living in and along the Fox River, the health of people who eat Fox River fish and wild game, and documented PCB health effects around the globe.

The second study, called a Remedial Investigation (RI), provides information on the levels and lo cations of contamination in the Lower Fox River. This investigation confirms that PCBs are the most pervasive pollutant in the river system.

The final study is a Feasibility Study (FS) that evaluates various cleanup methods based on comparisons of factors such as cost, technical aspects and public acceptance. The FS presents many cleanup alternatives that would reduce PCB-associated risks to people and the environment. The DNR is not at this time recommending any one alternative, but will use information gathered from the public comments to help finalize a cleanup solution.

Edward Lynch of the DNR's Remediation and Redevelopment Bureau says a number of people brought up questions about the economic aspects of cleanup. It is the goal of the State of Wisconsin and EPA to develop a plan that protects human health, the environment *and* the

economy.

The DNR will be revising the RA, RI and FS by this fall. Once the studies are finalized, the Department will propose a cleanup plan and submit it for public review over a 60-day comment period. The proposed plan will include more detailed information on costs and time-frames for carrying out the cleanup. A final plan is expected by the end of the year.

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Fish & Wildlife Service to Release PCB Pathway Report

By Larry Dean, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Stopping PCB movement throughout Green Bay and Lake Michigan (above) is the primary motivation for the Lower Fox River cleanup.

In the summer of 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will release a report documenting the movement of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from paper mill facilities into natural resources such as sediment, water and living organisms in the Fox River, Green Bay, and parts of Lake Michigan. The report is part of the Fox River and Green Bay Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) being conducted by the federal government and the Oneida and Menominee tribes.

The PCB release and pathway report will be available for review on the Internet at http://www.fws.gov/r3pao, and by appointment at the FWS Reading Room at 1015 Challenger Court in Green Bay (call Joe Moniot at 920-465-7408 to schedule an appointment). In addition, FWS will hold a public meeting at the Brown County Library on August 5, 1999, from 7-10 p.m. to describe how Fox River PCBs disperse throughout the Green Bay system.

The PCB release and pathway report will describe:

- PCB releases from paper mill facilities into the Fox River.
- PCBs within the Fox River and how they move into Green Bay.
- the physical processes that move sediment, water, and PCBs within Green Bay.
- how the concentrations of PCBs vary from place to place within Green Bay sediment, water, and living organisms.
- how the concentrations of PCBs vary over time within Green Bay sediment, water, and living organisms.
- how the distribution of PCBs in water, sediment, and living organisms changes according to time and distance between the release point and the Fox River.
- how computer models can be used to show PCB pathways.
- the relevance of data, studies, and models for making legal determinations of PCB

releases and pathways for the NRDA.

Because the need to stop PCB movement throughout Green Bay and Lake Michigan is the primary motivation for the intergovernmental cleanup effort, this report is relevant to both the cleanup of the Fox River and restoration of the Green Bay system. By producing this report, FWS hopes that the public will be better prepared to grapple with the question of what to do about the Fox River and Green Bay PCB problem.

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Profile On...

David Allen

Federal scientist leads the effort to assess natural resource damages in Green Bay.

By Mary Young, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services

David Allen

David Allen is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Federal Assessment Manager leading the effort to gauge natural resource damages from polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination in the Lower Fox River. He leads a multi-disciplinary team of approximately 100 experts assembled to conduct the federal/tribal natural resource damage assessment for the river and Green Bay.

Allen has lived in Northeast Wisconsin since 1992, but has fished the waters of Green Bay every year since 1965. "My family has vacationed in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan all the way back to the 1920s," he says. "Some of my earliest memories are of our trips from camp to fish the Bays de Noc and the waters around Garden and Stonington Peninsulas at the north end of Green Bay."

Allen grew up in Ohio and earned a bachelor's degree in zoology from Ohio State University (OSU), where he also studied physics, computer engineering, and music. After graduation, he earned his pilot's license and then returned to graduate school at OSU to study wildlife management with Dr. Tom Townsend, Professor of Wildlife Management at OSU.

While conducting research on radiotelemetry and urban populations of white-tailed deer for his master's degree in wildlife management, Allen also began his tenure with the government by working as a research intern for the City of Cleveland. Since then, he has worked for the State of Ohio and now the Federal Government.

"I'm glad I had the opportunity to work for both state and local governments earlier in my career," he says. "It helps me keep perspective on the Fox River project because every level of government is involved directly."

Since 1992, Allen has dedicated his professional career to assessing natural resource damages on the Lower Fox River and Green Bay, one of the larger federal assessments in the U.S. "It's

very rewarding to work with national experts from such diverse academic fields: toxicologists, ecologists, chemists, engineers, economists, and lawyers," he says. "A large part of my job is learning what the experts know about the Fox River and Green Bay so that I can help translate between academic specialists, as well as to decision makers and the general public."

Allen says that the Fox River and Green Bay assessment has brought him full circle from when he first heard of PCB fish consumption advisories on Green Bay as a boy."Then, PCBs were a mystery to me, except that the fish I caught were less safe to eat. Now, I have the opportunity to help fix that very problem."

Allen says that finding so many other people in Northeast Wisconsin and beyond willing to engage this difficult problem is the greatest reward of all.

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For More Information

Information available at local libraries

Information repositories, containing technical reports, summary fact sheets, and other information, are set up in the reference section at the following local libraries. Information repositories at public libraries in Menasha and Kimberly have been discontinued.

Appleton Public Library
225 N. Oneida St.
Appleton
920-832-6170

Brown County Library
515 Pine St.
Green Bay
920-448-4381, ext. 394

DePere Public Library
380 Main Ave.
DePere
920-448-4407

Door County Library
104 S. Fourth Ave.
Sturgeon Bay
920-743-6578

Kaukauna Public Library
111 Main Ave.
Kaukauna
920-766-6340

Little Chute Public Library
625 Grand Ave.
Little Chute
920-788-7825

Neenah Public Library
240 E. Wisconsin Ave.
Neenah
920-751-4722

Oneida Community Library
201 Elm St.
Oneida
920-869-2210

Oshkosh Public Library
106 Washington Ave.
Oshkosh
920-236-5200

Wrightstown Public Library
529 Main St.
Wrightstown
920-532-4011

Check out these Web sites:

http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/lowerfox

http://www.epa.gov/region5/foxriver/

http://www.fws.gov/r9dec/nrdar/nrdamain.html

http://www.fws.gov/r3pao/nrda/

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in these articles are solely those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by all members of the Fox River Intergovernmental Partnership.

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